

### **'Earmarks and politics'**

**By Sam Farr, Member of Congress**

***Good Times*, Santa Cruz, Calif.**

**June 20, 2007**

Sometimes, Congress is a mature, deliberative body, intent on passing the best laws possible and serving the American people responsibly. Other times, Congress acts more like a group of four-year-old children, stamping their feet and pouting when they don't get everything they want.

Last week, thanks to my Republican colleagues, we definitely saw the latter.

One of the most important duties of Congress is to decide how to spend our nation's money, what we call the appropriations process. I'm proud to sit on the Appropriations Committee, where I help decide how our budget will be spent, and where I can make sure the values and priorities of the Central Coast are represented.

But last week, we witnessed an embarrassing spectacle. The Republicans selected the Homeland Security funding bill to play politics. They chose to filibuster a bill that would increase funding for our police, firefighters and emergency responders. They chose to delay a bill that would increase funding to keep our borders secure. They chose to delay a bill that would make America safer.

The Democratic leadership decided early in the funding process to delay the inclusion of earmarks -- funds for projects in a single district -- until bills enter the negotiation process with the Senate in July. Those earmarks would have a full month for inspection, criticism and defense. This process would provide the most transparency ever for earmarks.

But the Republicans are still a little bitter after their recent election setbacks. Setbacks, I don't need to remind anyone, that came about largely because they fostered an atmosphere of corruption and secrecy. So they decided the appropriations process was their chance to lash out.

The Republicans conveniently sweep under the rug the fact that earmarks in previous funding cycles ballooned under their leadership. They forget that their policies were corrupt to the core. And their leader, President Bush -- one of the most prolific spenders of our time -- says he'll veto any spending bills above his requested level. The hypocrisy is striking.

But this is about more than just appropriations. It's about the Republicans, led by President Bush, breaking a promise. When voters booted Republicans out of power in November, they offered Democrats a mandate for change.

The American people want a more responsive government, a more transparent government. Democrats are working to provide that transparency. Too bad a GOP tantrum could upend the will of the people.